THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • SEPTEMBER 16, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 32 • LATE CITY EDITION

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NORA FATEHI | FACEBOOK

Nora Fatehi grilled in Sukesh extortion case

Bollywood actor Nora Fatehi was on Thursday questioned for nearly five hours by Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing in connection with an extortion case linked to alleged conman Sukesh Chandrashekhar. Fatehi was questioned alongside Pinki Irani who allegedly introduced her to Chandrashekhar. Irani was quizzed on Wednesday too along with actor Jacqueline Fernandez in connection with the case.

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HIJAB ROW

Edu institutes can prescribe uniform: SC

SHRUTI KAKKAR @ New Delhi

WHILE hearing pleas challenging the Karnataka High Court's verdict on banning hijab in educational institutes, the Supreme Court on Thursday said there were statutory rules which say that educational institutions have the power to prescribe uniforms.

Responding to Advocate Prashant Bhushan's contention that schools cannot restrict entry to students for not wearing a dress and that a public institution, particularly a government institution, could not impose a dress code, Justice Hemant Gupta asked, "So your submission is that government schools can't have a uniform?" "Yes, but even if they can, they can't restrict hijab," Bhushan responded. "The rules say they have the power to prescribe uniforms. Hijab is different," Justice Dhulia said.

Bhushan argued that over the years, Muslim girls wearing hijab had acquired a religious identity which was protected under Article 25 of the Constitution. "It may not be prescribed as an essential practice by Quran, but if it is a bona fide practice followed by several women, it cannot be proscribed," he added.

To make good his submission that the severe fallout of the Government Order (GO) which restrained students to wear the hijab to educational institutions was the dropout of Muslim girls, Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal referred to a RTI reply obtained by an English newspaper as per which 145 out of 900 Muslim girls in Dakshina Kannada took transfer certificates. P9

DKS

ED SUMMONS KPCC PRESIDENT

Agency says Shivakumar, who was a minister during the Congress regime, had made huge amount of illegal cash | P4

Time to say goodbye

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN @ Chennai

LOWER your sporting flags to half mast. Mute your TV sets during live sports broadcasts. Shed a tear or two. Genuflect before a tennis racquet. Any sporting equipment really. If you can afford it, fly to London for the Laver Cup, beginning on September 23. The three-day event will be Roger Federer's final ATP event. The Swiss great, in an emotional video message on his Instagram handle, announced his retirement from the game that he has served with unparalleled distinction since turning professional in 1998.

"... I also know my body's capacities and limits, and its message to me lately has been clear. I am 41 years old. I have played more than 1500 matches over 24 years. Tennis has treated me more generously than I ever would have dreamt, and now I must recognize when it is time to end my competitive career. The Laver Cup next week in London will be my final ATP event... This is a bittersweet decision, because I will miss everything the tour has given me." While the announcement was expected - his body was failing him and surgeries were increasingly 'Hail Mary' options — the news still affected not just the tennis community but sports fans in general. It's not because of the number of matches or titles he racked up — it had a role — but it was the idea of Federer that made fans fall in love with the Swiss. He elevated sport to art and composed mood-lifting music on a tennis court that resonated with people irrespective of their allegiance, a joie-de-vivre.

In an era where tennis became physical, he still showed it was possible to keep winning the game with his poetry. It was a privilege to watch him. It was like being in a high-end art gallery. You could spot the 'Mona Lisa' one moment. The 'Girl With A Pearl Earring' in another. Five minutes later, 'The Starry Night' would be the crowning glory. Just that, he kept creating each of these centuries-old works of art with a racquet.

The finesse, the beauty, the symphony all that he created on tennis court will be missed forever.

ROGER THAT!

DoB: Aug 8, 1981
Place: Basel, Switzerland
Turned pro: 1998

FAMILY
Wife, Mirka Vavrinec (married April 11, 2009); father to two sets of twins: Myla and Charlene (born July 23, 2009) and Leo and Lenny (born May 6, 2014).

CAREER
Titles 103
Grand Slam singles titles TWENTY
Australian Open 6
French Open 1
Wimbledon 8
US Open 5
ATP FINALS: 6?
Win/loss record 1,251/275
Prize money $130,594,339
Weeks at world No 1 310
Olympic Games 2008 doubles gold medallist (with Stan Wawrinka)
Davis Cup 2014 winner

More on Page 15

Another ploy to rig Cong polls?

State units to pass resolutions empowering the new party chief to appoint AICC members

SHAHID FARIDI @ New Delhi

IN an announcement that shocked those demanding fair and transparent organisational elections in the Congress, the party's central leadership has asked its state units to pass unanimous resolutions empowering the party president to appoint state presidents and AICC members.

The move will not only scuttle elections for the post of state presidents, it will also help rig the Congress Working Committee (CWC) polls with the central leadership appointing the AICC members who form the committee's electoral college.

Concerns have also been raised about the manner in which the 9,300 Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) delegates have been selected. These delegates will elect the new national president. The Pradesh Returning Officers, who were in-charge of supervising the election for PCC delegates, were a group of Gandhi family loyalists handpicked by the central leadership. These PROs prepared the list of PCC delegates in consultation with the central leadership. There were no elections for PCC delegates in any state, except the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

As a result, the PCC delegates who will elect the new Congress president are carefully selected loyalists, and the AICC members who will elect the new CWC will also be selected by the new party president as the state units have been asked to authorise the party president to appoint them. The whole process is clearly rigged to elect either one of the Gandhis or their proxy as the party's national president, and pack the CWC with their nominees.

JHA'S PLAINSPEAK

"For almost two decades or more no one in the Congress expressed any interest in making the organizational polls transparent... As a result no one is ready to fight elections. And without a contest, the whole process will lack credibility," former Congress spokesperson Sanjay Jha said

This paper was the first to reveal that the Congress party's organisational elections would be rigged. The leadership has now gone a step further to also capture the posts of state president and CWC members.

Congress' central election authority chairman Madhusudan Mistry on Thursday said "the PROs will call a meeting of PCC delegates where they will pass resolutions to authorise the incoming president to appoint PCC presidents and AICC delegates."

He said out of the 23 CWC members, 12 are elected while 11 are nominated. "If there are more than 12 contenders for the CWC elected seats then there will be elections," he said.

Karnataka becomes 10th state with Act against 'forced' conversion

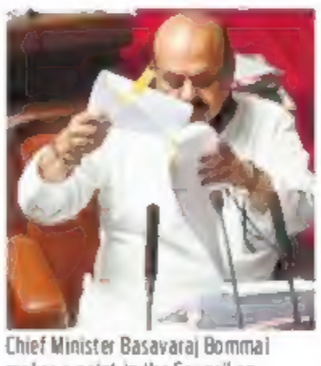
M G CHETAN @ Bengaluru

AMIDST strong opposition by the Congress and JDS members, the BJP government passed the contentious Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Bill 2022, also know as anti-conversion Bill, which makes forcible conversions a non-bailable and punishable offence, in the Legislative Council, on Thursday. Karnataka becomes the tenth state in the country to enact such a law.

The state assembly had passed the Bill in December 2021 but was tabled in the Council as the ruling BJP lacked the numbers to get the Bill cleared in the Upper House then. However, after the recent elections to the Council, the BJP has gained a majority. In May this year, the government promulgated an ordinance, which was criticised by the opposition.

The minimum jail term for offences under the newly-enacted law is three years with a penalty ranging from Rs 25,000 to Rs 2 lakh. Marriages with the sole purpose of unlawful conversions will be declared null and void by the courts on the filing of a petition either by the wife or the husband.

The House witnessed acrimonious scenes when Home Minister Araga Jnanendra proposed to pass the Bill after a five-hour debate. A few Congress members, including Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council, BK Hariprasad, tore the copies of the Bill, raised slogans against the BJP government, and accused the protem Chairman Raghunath Rao Malkapure of not being democratic, before staging a walkout. P4



Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai makes a point in the Council on Thursday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

PUNISHMENT

- Jail term of 3 years to 5 years with ₹25,000 as penalty for first-time offence.
- Jail term of 3 years to 10 years with ₹50,000 penalty for converting minors, persons of unsound mind, women, or persons belonging to the SC/ST.
- Jail term of 3 years to 10 years with ₹1 lakh penalty for mass (two or more) conversion
- Jail term not less than 5 years with ₹2 lakh penalty for second-time offence.

Xi shares concern on Ukraine war

Meets his Russian counterpart Putin on the sidelines of the SCO summit | P12

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is set to begin in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on Thursday

Russian president Vladimir Putin blasted the US for its "ugly policies" and thanked Chinese leader Xi Jinping for his 'balanced' stand on Ukraine

Xi had questions and concerns on the Ukraine war, Putin later revealed. This is the first time Xi has been quoted as having worries on the war

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who landed in Samarakand on Thursday night, is expected to have separate bilateral meetings with Putin and other heads of nations

8 COUNTRIES

SCO members — China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

EXPRESS READ

K'taka seeks NHAI help to clear illegal tolls

Bengaluru: Karnataka will approach the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) to seek cancellation of illegal tolls put up at short distances across the state. PWD Minister C C Patil said a report will be submitted to the NHAI | P4

Govt orders inquiry into two deaths at VIMS

Bengaluru: The state government has ordered an inquiry into the death of two people in the ICU of Vijayanagara Institute of Medical Sciences (VIMS) in Ballari due to alleged power failure on Wednesday night | P7

Crack on track disrupts Purple Line services

Bengaluru: Hundreds of commuters were hit hard due to a rail fracture on one of the tracks on Metro's Purple Line between Mysore Road and Kengeri early on Thursday as the services were delayed on the stretch | P2

BBMP's flip-flop on encroachment demolition drive raises eyebrows

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

A sudden shift in the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) approach for selectively choosing areas to halt removal of encroachments on drains — the "villains" behind the recent floods from the east to south-east parts of Bengaluru — has raised suspicions on whether the civic body is serious about the demolitions, or whether it is an eyewash.

BBMP's 'Operation Storm Water Drain Encroachment' drive to remove encroachments entered the fourth day. The civic body cleared 29 encroachments in four zones on Thursday, taking the tally to 73 since Monday.

Interestingly, the drive in parts of Mahadevapura zone which were the worst affected by the floods, and where JCBs were pressed for the first three days as part of the demolition, was stopped. The BBMP now wants to take up a 'survey' and only then resume the demolition drive. As part of the sudden change in stand, the BBMP set up a Survey Task Force after stopping the demolition drive until the survey was completed. Places like Vagdevi Layout, Munnekolalu, Kasavanahalli Village, ABK Village, Prestige Tech Park, Wipro, Sunny Brooks Doddakanahalli, Belathur Village, Sadaramangala Village, Bollenini Sasa Apartment Interior and Sai Garden Layout are being surveyed. Corporation officials and Land Surveyors Department officials conducted a survey and issued notices to the squatters.

Instead of focusing on removing encroachments in the worst-affected areas of Bengaluru, the BBMP has taken up the drive in Dasarahalli, Yelahanka (both in north Bengaluru), Bommanahalli (south) and parts of Mahadevapur zone (east and south-east). P2

HC ASKS BBMP IF PROBE IS ON

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday orally asked the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) whether proceedings of encroachments have been stayed and if any parallel authority is inquiring into the storm water drain encroachments issue.

Peace pact with eight Assam tribal groups

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

TEN years after a peace process began with eight Assam rebel adivasi groups, the Centre signed a tripartite agreement with the outfits, including the Birsa Commando Force (BCF), Adivasi People's Army (APA) and All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), here on Thursday in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The pact was signed "to end decades old crisis of adivasi and tea garden workers in Assam", the ministry said. The accord was followed by the laying down of arms by 1,182 cadre of the tribal groups who will now join the mainstream. The Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam (AMA), the Santhal Tiger Force and the other three outfits are splinter groups of the BCF, AANLA and the ACMA.

Pointing out that 8,000 militants in the northeast have laid down their weapons since 2014, Shah said that the Centre aimed to end "disputes related to armed groups" in the region before 2024.

Thursday's agreement entailed a responsibility on the part of the Centre and the Assam government to "fulfill the political, economic and educational aspirations of the adivasi groups".

The pact not only provides for the establishment of an Adivasi Welfare and Development Council that will "ensure speedy and focused development of tea gardens" but also work to rehabilitate and resettle the armed cadre and tea plantation workers.

The Centre also announced a ₹1,000-crore development package — ₹500 crore each by the Centre and the Assam government — for infrastructure development in the villages and areas where the adivasi population live.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah with representatives of eight Adivasi groups in Assam, after signing a tripartite pact with them, in New Delhi on Thursday